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second place, not only were there, in the heresies and schisms which distracted the early Church, just the proper and necessary occasions for asserting the authority of the Pontiff and infallibility—either of him or of the Roman Church—but there is distinct evidence that his decisions were rejected, and his encroachments disallowed. The extracts which you adduce from the Fathers are of that character, that—to take a very safe position, yet quite sufficient for my purpose—do not *plainly* or satisfactorily, for any reasonable man, prove your doctrines. Hence, you *interpret* these extracts. You say the Fathers *meant* so and so. You catch at every ambiguous word; you strain any sentence of doubtful import; you give, instead of dogmatic averments of these writers, instead of explicit decisions of councils, your own reasons or assertions that they must have meant what you want to make them mean. Instead of their own declarations, which you cannot produce, you offer arguments, and mostly very weak ones, to prove they *must* have intended what, at least, they have never said; you give *interpretations of their interpretations*, and, after all your clamour against the right and dangers of private judgment, base your whole case, in the last resort, upon it—upon your interpretations of the Fathers' interpretations—and, therefore, by your own account of human judgment, upon a double fallibility.

[The reader will perceive that this argument is an extension of one used in the early part of the discussion against the Roman Catholic use of Scripture. That was shown either to involve a *petitio principii*, or to be an inference of private judgment. The same is here applied to the argument from the Fathers. The sophism is the same, only it is better hid by being put farther off. It appears so important to show it clearly, that I shall take leave to state it as explicitly as I can. It is plain that the whole body of the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome rests on the admission of her infallibility. If this be fairly proved, they are proved; if not, they fall. Accordingly, when Scriptural proof of this cardinal doctrine is attempted, her advocates are stopped by being reminded they cannot assume the doctrine when proving it. The difficulty is so clear that the Church of Rome rests the proof upon the assertion that there is an unanimous consent of the Fathers on this subject. Thus the burden of proof for the doctrine is transferred to the proof of this fact, and the whole case rests upon it. The next step is, therefore, to produce the passages from the Fathers which establish such unanimous consent. They are adduced; but they do not contain any clear, or, indeed, any statements at all of any such doctrine. We have no instances where they speak thus—The Church interprets, or I interpret, these words, "Thou art Peter" (or any other passage), as declaring the Bishop or Church of Rome to be infallible. Hence, the burden of proof is again shifted to the ascertainment of what the Fathers *meant*. Upon this there is all imaginable litigation. The Protestant side having the clear victory so far, that their opponents have never yet produced passages which convey anything like an explicit statement of this doctrine of infallibility, not only not from *all* the Fathers, but not even from *one* of them. Thus the proof of the doctrine comes to this issue—"What did the Fathers *mean*." But here, of course, the infallibility of the Church, as an interpreter of such meaning, cannot be alleged or allowed. Thus the decision comes to the issue of *private judgment*, and must come to it.

I do not see how it is possible to deny the fairness of this argument, or to refute it. The sophism, however, works in this way. It seems fair enough for Roman Catholics to exercise their judgment upon the writings of men, though they prohibit it upon the revelation of God. It looks as if there was no contradiction in doing so. But it is concealed, all the while, that the proof from Scripture, in reality, comes to the proof from the Fathers, and that it cannot be infallibly certain the doctrine itself is true, unless the proof for it be so likewise. But this proof, resting ultimately upon the sense to be attached to the meaning of the Fathers, is subject to all the dangers which the Roman Church ascribes to human judgment by which alone such patristic proof is made out. Thus the proof of infallibility is completely shattered. The Church of Rome commits suicide by prohibiting private judgment on passages of the Scriptures which contain articles of faith. She slays her own pretensions in order to escape death to them from the hands of her opponents.

I can best elucidate the sophism which I have been endeavouring to expose, by the use of an admirable illustration—"Nothing is stronger than its weakest part." The strength of a chain depends on its weakest link. The number of strong links do not add to the strength of the chain, but they increase the difficulty of detecting the faulty one.—See *Elements of Logic*, by the Archbishop of Dublin.]

As to the consent of the Fathers, which you allege as united in witnessing to the antiquity of your doctrines—your recent convert, Dr. Newman, disposes of this, and surrenders it as *impossible of proof*. His theory is, that the present doctrines of the Church of Rome did not exist in primitive times, as they now exist. Their *germs* only can be traced. These were *developed* in after ages, and expanded into your modern tenets. How do you answer this? It is manifest destruction to your argument from antiquity.

You say, as your Church avers, that there does exist an unanimous consent of the Fathers, interpreting, as you now interpret, those passages of Scripture upon which you

profess to ground your peculiar doctrines. Let us test the fact. I shall take one of the most eminent among them. I select St. Augustine, not only for positive disproof of the truth of such assertion, but because he is, also, a witness against your prohibition of private judgment.

Augustine wrote upon the passage "Thou art Peter," &c. He not only interprets the rock to mean Christ, but gives an admirable reason for thinking so. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid—Christ Jesus." It is true, indeed, that he also says, I have elsewhere interpreted the rock to mean Peter, but more frequently to be Christ. But which of these two interpretations be the best, let the reader choose.

Now, if, as you say, the Church always interpreted the rock to be St. Peter, how could Augustine have been ignorant of the fact, or as, an orthodox writer, venture to oppose her. It is clear, from his manner of treating the passage, that he was quite unconscious of any such authoritative, or according counter-interpretation. This, if it existed, he could not but know. Hence, he is evidence, not merely that there was no unanimous consent (for he is one exception), but that there was no ecclesiastical or dogmatical interpretation at all. Moreover, how do you answer his concluding words—"let the reader judge?" Can you find in them your doctrine which prohibits men from exercising their judgment upon passages which contain articles of faith?

[The following is the reply given in the "Resumé" to this argument:—"The Doctor quoted a passage from St. Augustine on the interpretation of the words, 'Thou art Peter,' from which it would appear that the Father held two opinions about this text—viz., that the rock was Peter or Christ; but supposing even this to be the case, can the doubt of St. Augustine on the meaning of *one* among the *many* texts proving the supremacy of St. Peter, outweigh his own testimony in other parts of his writings, and those of all the early Fathers in favour of this supremacy?"

Here it is conceded that so far as St. Augustine's testimony goes, the doctrine of Pontifical infallibility and jurisdiction was not *settled* as being derived from the main passage on which they are now based, while no answer is given to the inference from his concluding words, against the existence of any interpretative authority precluding the exercise of human judgment.]

Dr. M.—You have made certain extracts from early writers, and made some assertions thereon. Some of these last are notoriously unfounded. Of these extracts, none, so far as I know them, prove your doctrines.

Thus you say, that upon the occasion of a schism in the Corinthian Church, an appeal was made to Clement of Rome for interference and advice. Suppose the fact to be so; what does it prove? "Interference and advice" are not infallibility and supremacy. The Corinthians acted wisely in asking such advice, and would have acted more wisely in following it. If the faith of the Church of Rome was as pure now as it was then, similar appeals would, in all likelihood, be made. Nothing was more natural than the appeal of the Corinthian to the Roman Church; for St. Paul (not St. Peter) was the bond of connection between them. He was a founder of one, and the founder of the other Church. This Epistle is written in the name of the Church—i.e., the people of Rome, to that of Corinth. It is, as Irenæus describes it, a very pathetic letter. It exhorts the unruly to obedience towards their own pastors, but never once enforces their allegiance to himself as Bishop of Rome; nor is there anything in the whole letter, bearing on the present discussion, which does not tell against you.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

ON THE INFALLIBLE CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Having been favoured with a copy of your December LAYMAN, I cannot avoid briefly alluding to your remarks on the "Infallible Church." Being exceedingly sensible of the almost worse than utility of controversy in swaying the judgments of those to whom it is addressed, and of the angry and unpleasant feelings which it invariably excites between the most temperate of contenders, it is with the utmost reluctance that I approach anything which could possibly be regarded as such; some of your arguments, however, seem so easily refuted by those of a contrary character that spontaneously suggest themselves, that I cannot refrain from repeating them. The desire which you seem to feel for the promotion of fair discussion will, I am sure, prove a sufficient guarantee for their insertion.

From the following considerations and texts, it will be evident that Christ instituted in his Church an exterior coercive authority, by which controverted points and subjects pertaining to religion are decided by an infallible judgment:—Cor. i. 11—"There are contentions among you." Cor. i. 13—"Is Christ divided?" Cor. i. 17—"For Christ sent me, &c., &c." Cor. i. 9—"God is faithful, &c., &c. Who does not but tremble and wonder at the express words of the Apostle of nations in teaching the Corinthians the necessity of unity; and, at the same time, he assures us that, necessarily to fulfil the ordinance of God, there exist

schisms and heresies to prove and confirm the faith of Christ's followers; but, at the same time, God does not permit his faithful to be tempted more than their belief permits them to withstand such temptations. Then it follows, that Christ has taken precautions sufficient to deter the faithful from falling into heresy or being led astray from the way of salvation by false preachers. The nature of such precaution will be our immediate inquiry.

That there should exist an infallible judge to decide controverted religious questions, the wisdom of God necessarily requires; for Christ, instituting his Church, compares it to a kingdom. Now, how can we conceive the establishment of a kingdom, or any other political society, if we do not suppose, existing therein, a judge, invested with sufficient authority to decide controverted matters, with power, coercive and supreme. Again, Matt. xviii. 17—"He who does not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." From this solitary text of Scripture it is lawful to conclude, that Christ appointed in his Church a judge to decide disputes in matters pertaining to religion and the salvation of mankind.

I am, yours truly,

A REAL L. CORRAN MAN.

We gladly insert the letter of our correspondent, and trust that controversy conducted in such a calm and temperate spirit as his communication exhibits, and as we hope to preserve in our reply, is not likely to excite any angry or unpleasant feelings.

His first argument, so far as we understand it, is as follows:—"The Apostle condemns schisms and heresies—therefore, 'Christ must have taken precautions sufficient to deter the faithful from falling into heresies;' the only sufficient precaution is the gift of infallibility to the Church—therefore, the Church must possess this gift of infallibility. In reply to this, we beg to ask our correspondent, what persons he means by 'the faithful' in the above argument? If he means those who do not fall into heresies, no precautions are necessary; for it would be a contradiction in terms that the faithful should abandon the faith. But if he means Christians generally, it is quite certain (whatever we might have thought beforehand) that Christ has *not* thought fit to take such precautions as will prevent them from falling into heresy. The texts which our correspondent has cited, prove that heresies and schisms existed even in the Apostles' days; and they have continued to exist even in our own time. However strange this may appear to us, it is not more so than the fearful prevalence of sin in God's world. In both cases the fault is wholly man's and not God's. God does *deter* men from heresy by the warnings of his Apostles, and by giving them the Scriptures, in which he has clearly made known all things necessary to their salvation; but he has not seen fit to institute an "exterior coercive authority" to exclude heresies.

Our correspondent's next argument is drawn from the analogy of a kingdom or political society, in which it is necessary that there should be a judge invested with sufficient authority to decide controverted matters. We reply—In a kingdom is it not also absolutely necessary that not only there should be judges appointed, but that it should be known and unquestioned who they are?

Thus all the judges of our land are known men—known to be judges—and no person can doubt or question that these are the men; but if it were a doubtful point *who* were these judges, and if they had no commission to show, and no certain warrant for their authority, would not such judges rather multiply controversies than end them? So, likewise, if our Saviour, the King of the Church, had intended that all controversies of religion should be finally determined by some visible judge, who can doubt but that he would have expressed himself in plain terms about the matter? He would have said plainly, "I have appointed the Bishop of Rome to decide all controversies."

We wonder how any one can believe that our Saviour designed the Bishop of Rome to this office, and yet that he would not say so, nor cause it to be written by any of the Apostles or Evangelists, so much as once, but left it to be drawn out of uncertain principles by consequences still more uncertain.

As for the third argument, derived from the text, "Hear the Church," our correspondent is probably not aware that the meaning of this text has already been frequently discussed in this paper.*

The context clearly shows that our Lord is speaking, not of controversies of faith, but of matters of private dispute between Christians, which they were directed to bring, not before heathen tribunals, but before the local church to which they belonged; and any person who refused to submit to its arbitration would no longer be treated as a member of that body. We will merely cite the entire passage, which speaks for itself—"Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, then thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

* Vide CATHOLIC LAYMAN, VOL. I., p. 68; Feb II., p. 122.